

The Athenian Mercury:

Tuesday October 24. 1693.

This with all the Seven following Questions
from the Poetical Lady.

Quest. 1. **W**Hether a thing Indifferent in it self,
as the Eating of Blood, if persisted
in with a Doubting Conscience, be
damning?

Ans. The ground of this Question we suppose is that of the Apostle, "He that doubteth is Damned if he Eat — to which We say, First, That what we render Damned there, has by good Commentators been thought to signifie no more than Condemned, Self-condemn'd or Judged by his own mistaken Conscience: However the Dictates of such a Conscience, in a thing of no greater moment, and left indifferent by Authority, do, We think, Oblige to act or forbear according to their Direction — the consequence whereof is, that the refusing to follow such Direction is a Sin, and every Sin is by Protestants accounted in its own Nature, damning, and will be actually so without Repentance: Tho' in the mean time, those who scruple any such indifferent Action ought to get their Consciences better inform'd, and to consider the Nature of an indifferent thing, which is no other, as the Word it self Confesses, than such as a Person is left indifferent as to the doing of it, or letting it alone, neither of 'em being a Sin — the Consideration of which is sufficient to satisfy any who don't wilfully close their Eyes against common Sense and Reason.

Quest. 2. In the Ladies Question about Patches, she said she would leave 'em off when she came in those places where they would give Offence: You told her in your Answer, 'twas more than she was bound to do; Now my Query is, Whether that in the 14th. Rom. 13. don't Oblige her to it?

Ans. We are still of the same Mind, and think she is not Oblig'd either by that or any other place of Scripture to abridge her own just Liberty, only to prevent a weak Persons taking Offence at it: Our Reason is, Because the Offence, or scandalizing our Brethren, mention'd by this Apostle and by our Saviour, is quite different from the Offence mention'd in the Question: That Offence was a proper Greek Scandal or Stumbling-block, which is defin'd by St. Paul himself (in the place already cited) an Occasion to fall, v. 13. and that such as would Destroy our Brother, v. 15, & 20. whence 'tis plain that it must be Causing our Brother to Sin by our means that is here spoken against, which the Christian then might do in two Instances: First, Towards the Jews, by keeping them from Christianity in judging or reviling 'em for their Ceremonial Nicetys, concerning Meats and Drinks. Secondly, Towards the Heathens, in eating Meat sacrific'd to Idols, which harden'd the Gentiles in their Idolatry, and might give Occasion to weak Christians wholly to Apostatize from the Faith; but sure neither of these Effects, nor any thing like 'em, can come from Wearing Patches, nor can we suppose others shou'd Wear 'em against their Consciences from any such Example, which is the only proper Scandal We can possibly conceive shou'd be taken at them, this being so far from being likely, that there's more fear of their Uncharitable Anger and Displeasure than sinfull Imitation. That therefore that's requir'd on both sides in the present Case, is, that we Judge not one another, as the Apostle expressly tells us, for, as he says afterwards, "The Kingdom of God is not Meats and Drinks (nor Cloaths, nor Ornaments) but Righteousness and Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghost.

Quest. 3. I was once Reprov'd by a Minister for Wearing of Pearl; to convince me, he told me 'twas plainly forbidden

in the 1st. of Timothy 2. 9. where the Christian Women are Order'd not to wear it: I have since seen Dr. Hammond's and Mr. Pool's Annotations on the place, but yet remain unsatisfied, and therefore desire your Judgment thereon?

Ans. 'Tis not likely that We shou'd satisfy your Doubt, if such as you have Nam'd already have fail'd of doing it — which yet We think in it self very easie to be done. In Order to which We shall first Observe, that this Direction relates especially to Religious Assemblies, at which Christian Women are not present themselves, so as to ensnare the Eyes of the Beholders with their Beauty and Gaiety; but, as well as the Men in the 8th. v. to lift up Holy Hands without Wrath and Doubting. Then further, Dr. Hammond says in his Paraphrase, "That Women are here required to come to the Assemblies and Pray in such an Attire as is decent, accounting Modesty and Sobriety the greatest (he does not say the only) Ornament, and not setting themselves out vainly, and with Ostentation, in Curious Dressings, &c. thus far he; and indeed 'tis plain, that the meaning of the Apostle is no more than that they ought rather to delight in the Ornaments of Good Works, and of a meek and quiet Spirit, than in Pearls and Jewels. That this is the genuine Sense of the Words, will (We think) be plain from these following Considerations. First, That 'tis very common in the Holy Scriptures to put a Negative instead of a Comparative, see Gen. 5. 8. and twenty other Instances; take one that's very plain, in Prov. 8. 10. Receive my Instruction and not Silver: Is not here express Text for the Mendicant Fryars, that must not touch a Groat, (unless you put it into their Sleeve) and would not this soon put an end to Trade, or reduce all to the Primitive way of Barter, if we shou'd deny Meanings, as some foolish Enthusiasts have done? But it appears both from Common Sense and the other part of the Verse, that (as has been said) a Negative is put for a Comparative; for it follows, and Knowledge rather than Choice Gold. Ager, in the Controverted Text, Wearing Gold and all Costly Array is mentioned as well as well as Pearl; but We know the Holy Women of Old were sometimes adorn'd with Gold, as particularly the History of Rebecca shows us, and that in so odd a manner as Nose-Jewels, &c. to and nothing of the King's Daughters Dress, who might be all glorious within, and yet her Cloathing too be of wrought Gold; Nor to insist on the Practice of our own and most other Nations, to Marry and Seal with Rings, usually of the same Metall. But our last Argument, if there's need of more, that the present place is to be understood in the Sense wherein We have explain'd it, shall be taken from the Comparison of another Scripture with it, which is very like it, and which must necessarily be taken in this Comparative Sense; 'tis the 1st. of St. Pet. 3. 3. where the Apostle tells the Wives — that their Adorning shou'd not be that outward Adorning of Plaining the Hair, and wearing of Gold, or of putting on of Apparel, but the hidden Man of the Heart, &c. Now here's a very full Text for the Adamites, in the Sense of that Minister, Madam, who is so angry at your Pearl-Necklace, all putting on of Apparel being therein as it seems expressly and directly forbidden, and accordingly not only Naked Breasts would be lawfull, nay a Duty, but even Primitive Simplicity all over. But this being an absurd and ridiculous Sense, We must therefore enquire for another, which can be only that We have given, and which ought to be admitted in St. Paul as well as St. Peter, and the former Scripture as well as this.

Quest. 4. What Books of Poetry would you Advise one that's Young, and extremely delights in it, to read, both Divine and other?

Ans.

Ans. For Divine, David's Psalms, Sandys's and Woodford's Versions, Lloyd's Canticles, Cowley's Davideis, Sir F. Davis's *Nosce Teipsum*, Herbert's and Crasshaw's Poems, Milton's *Paradises*, and (if you have Patience) Wesley's Life of Christ. For others, Old Merry Chaucer, Gawen Douglas's *Aeneas* (if you can get it) the best Version that ever was, or We believe ever will be, of that incomparable Poem; Spenser's *Fairy Queen*, &c. Tasso's *Godfrey of Bulloign*, Shakespear, Beaumont and Fletcher, Ben. Johnson, Randal, Cleaveland, Dr. Donne, Gondibert, WALLER, all DRYDEN, Tate, Oldham, Flitman, The Plain Dealer — and when you have done of these, We'll promise to provide you more.

Quest. 5. *Whether it's not a Crime to be True to one that's False to his Honour, his King and his Country?*

Ans. There's another Question to be askt, Madam, before We can Resolve yours: Of what Nature are the Obligations of Truth and Faith between the Persons concern'd? if *Matrimonial*, nothing Dissolves 'em by our Law, and We think by the Law of God too, but *Adultery* or *Death*. If the Obligations lye between single Persons, and are only those of Love and Friendship, they are no longer in force towards one who so little deserves 'em, No, tho' 'twere your own *Orestes*; and We are almost confident that one who is Mistress of so fine a Soul, has also Strength enough to lay the greatest Violence on her Inclinations, and whatsoever it costs her, shake off a Friendship for one who has no Faith, nor Loyalty, nor Honour; and We heartily Wish that all others who love King William, would follow so glorious an Example, letting those *Jews* who are so Curled as to hate him, still *Match* in their own *Tribe*, that they may not taint any honest English Blood, by mingling with it.

Quest. 6. *Supposing any Liberty a Person has taken in their Discourse or Behaviour shou'd have such an Influence on a Mind less fortified as to plunge 'em into Vices from which they could never be recall'd, and which otherwise they had probably been never guilty of: Query, Whether such a Person is not bound to make 'em Restitution as far as they can by a stricter Example and Friendly Advice, and to let 'em know the Pleasure and Serenity inseparable from Virtue and Innocence? and supposing them for ever depriv'd of an Opportunity of doing so, Whether their Repentance without it will be available before God?*

Ans. There's first of all a great deal of difference between Imprudent and Criminal Liberties in Discourse and Conversation; both of these indeed may have ill Consequences, and therefore both to be Avoided and Repented of, tho' in a far different Degree; and no way can be more Effectual to repair such an Error than that Propos'd in the Question — But if that shou'd prove Ineffectual, if yet the Person who has been the Unhappy Occasion of another's Ruine, do all that lyes in their Power to retrieve 'em from Vice and Destruction, no more certainly will be requir'd of 'em, except a Hearty Sorrow for what they now find 'tis too late to amend.

Quest. 7. *What's your Opinion of the Book called Melius Inquirendum?*

Ans. You need not make any great Question what our Judgment is concerning it, since it may be guess'd at as plainly by the whole Drift of our Writing, as if We had *Windows* in our *Breasts* for you to read it. There's none We suppose who has seen it, but must own the Book has a good share of Wit in't, tho' to be sure We think it not so well stored with Reason: The Author seems to us rather to argue Subtilly, or if you please, Fallaciously, than Closely, and besides Advances little or nothing on the Subject, but what has been often before Objected and Answer'd.

Quest. 8. *Who was — but stay, you can't Conjure, and therefore I was as good e'ne let that Query alone.*

Ans. And least We shou'd be taken for Conjurers, We'll for the self-same Reason let alone the answering it.

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